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New York

Chairman: Mr. Sychou . . . . . (Belarus)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda items 60 to 81

General debate on all disarmament and international security agenda items *(continued)*

Mr. Hamdoon (Iraq) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate you, Sir, on your election to the chairmanship of the First Committee. We wish you and the other officers every success.

The events of the last 12 months reaffirm the priority accorded to nuclear disarmament by the international community and by the 1978 Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly. We hope that the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), despite its procedural and substantive shortcomings, will be a step in this direction.

The advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice issued on 8 July 1996 affirmed the obligation of States to pursue in good faith negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international control. The advisory opinion also emphasized that the threat or use of nuclear weapons is generally contrary to the requirements of international law applicable in armed conflict, particularly those of the principles and rules of international humanitarian law. This is in addition to the opinion of the Commission on Human Rights, which asserts that the production, possession and testing of nuclear weapons represent a serious threat to life. These opinions and positions give rise to serious questions about the legality of possessing nuclear weapons and impose on the international community, particularly on nuclear-weapon States, an additional obligation to strive to eliminate these weapons as quickly as possible.

As a first step in this direction, nuclear-weapon States should give legally binding guarantees to non-nuclear-weapon States against the threat or use of these weapons against them. My country, along with a group of 27 other members of the Conference on Disarmament, coordinated by the delegation of Egypt, had the honour to propose a programme of action for the elimination of nuclear weapons (CD/1419). We hope that this programme will form a realistic basis for the work of the ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament of the Conference on Disarmament, which we hope will be established at the beginning of the next session of the Conference. We also hope that the Conference's next document will give impetus to the efforts to achieve nuclear disarmament through the drafting of a convention prohibiting the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons so as to prevent the horizontal and vertical proliferation of these materials.

We also witnessed last year the conclusion of conventions and the submission of initiatives to establish or to expand nuclear-weapon-free zones. Regrettably, the Middle East region remains an exception to this trend, despite the declared intention of the countries in the region and international support for the idea. This is because Israel, which possesses nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction, refuses to abandon the nuclear option and to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). Israel insists on intimidating the countries of the region with its nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. It does so with disregard for

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the resolutions of the General Assembly, the Security Council and various regional and international bodies that call upon it to renounce the nuclear option. The fact that Israel remains the only country in the Middle East to be outside the non-proliferation regime, even though Security Council resolution 487 (1981) called upon it urgently to place its nuclear facilities under safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), is a clear example of the double standard present in international policies and in the implementation of these policies. It is well known that Israel's position on, and development of, nuclear weapons and its insistence on maintaining these weapons without any blame or accountability, let alone sanctions, would not have been possible without the assistance and support of the United States of America, a depositary of the NPT and an influential permanent member of the Security Council.

What promotes confidence and accelerates the international community's efforts in the field of disarmament is respect by all countries for the principles of the Charter and the provisions of international law, particularly the principles of full and mutual respect for the sovereignty of States, non-interference in their internal affairs and the renunciation of the use of force. Regrettably, these principles are being flouted daily in various parts of the world. My country has been subjected for years to a systematic attempt at destruction, spearheaded by the United States of America, which imposes by armed force no-fly zones in the north and south of Iraq. The United States of America also directs its missiles against Iraq from time to time. Its most recent acts of aggression took place on 3 and 4 October 1996, the reason was, as it said, that it wished to punish Iraq.

These practices and others undermine the authority of international law and the rules of peaceful relations between States. They also create precedents that bring the international community back to the law of the jungle and the rule of "might is right", thus making disarmament an increasingly elusive goal.

Our full support and continued efforts are required to maintain the momentum created by current initiatives in the field of disarmament. For this reason, we believe that the convening, before the year 2000, of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament will be a chance to strengthen the efforts of the international community in this area. It will also provide better opportunities for the success of the Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), to be held in the year 2000. We hope that by then, the Treaty will have become universal and that its article VI will be approaching implementation, according to the desired time-table, in order to attain the objectives of nuclear disarmament under strict and effective international control by the year 2020.

Mr. Boang (Botswana): My delegation will forgo the privilege of congratulating you, Mr. Chairman, but wishes heartily to endorse all the kind words that have been addressed to you.

Article VII of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) concedes to any group of States the right to conclude regional treaties intended to rid their areas of nuclear weapons. Taking this concession seriously to heart, countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, the South Pacific, Africa and South-East Asia, through the respective treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Pelindaba and Bangkok, went on to establish nuclear-weapon-free zones in their respective regions. This, coupled with the strict adherence of these States to the provisions of the NPT, clearly demonstrates their commitment to non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament.

It is also heartening to note that in the majority of cases, nuclear-weapon States have already committed themselves to the relevant applicable protocols. However, the absence of similar commitments with respect to the Treaty of Bangkok remains a cause of concern to my delegation. It cannot be denied that these arrangements, which have been arrived at freely, have actively contributed to ridding, for all time half the world's land mass of these most dreaded weapons. Nuclear-weapon States should therefore demonstrate their commitment to article I of the Non-Proliferation Treaty and their solidarity with us as partners under this Treaty by signing all the relevant Protocols accompanying the nuclear-weapon-free zone Treaties.

Our commitment as a non-nuclear-weapon State to non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament is not limited only to adherence to our respective nuclear-weapon-free zones. In furtherance of similar ideals to those of the Treaties of Bangkok, Pelindaba, Rarotonga and Tlatelolco, the delegation of Brazil has come up with an initiative to free all of the southern hemisphere and adjacent areas of nuclear weapons. This laudable initiative enjoys the full support of my delegation, and we commend similar sentiments expressed in this Committee.

In spite of our unflinching commitment to the provisions of the NPT and repeated calls over the years to

be assured, through a legally binding international instrument, against the threat or use of nuclear weapons by our powerful partners, their response has not been at all reassuring. While we take full cognizance of Security Council resolution 984 (1995), it remains our contention that it is only through a legally binding international instrument that the demands of an overwhelming majority of the membership of this Organization can be met.

We welcome the adoption of a Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) as a step in the right direction towards the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. However, the fact that the Treaty is limited in scope despite its being termed "comprehensive" is quite disconcerting. Our hope was that such a Treaty would not only ban nuclear explosions, but cover all aspects of activity related to the further development of nuclear weapons, such as computer simulations. We hope and pray that this was not a deliberate drafting ploy by those with the wherewithal, to rid themselves of an obsolete and controversial exercise while leaving room for the exploitation of their unmentioned but known capacity.

Not only does the text of the CTBT text have a deliberately flawed scope, but its penchant for ineffectiveness is exacerbated by efforts to hamper its entry into force. Perhaps the less said about this controversy, the better. Nonetheless, we accept it as the only crumbs one can get out of our highly rationalized disarmament machinery.

With the advent of a CTBT, a much quicker pace in negotiating and concluding an instrument banning the production and stockpile of weapons-grade fissile material is the next logical step for the Conference on Disarmament. We strongly urge that the work of an ad hoc committee on the fissile material cut-off convention be commenced without delay.

My delegation commends the United States for its ratification of START II. We are particularly happy with the announcement by President Clinton, of the United States readiness to begin discussing possibilities of further cuts in arsenals. However, preparedness to discuss only "possibilities" and "cuts", coupled with delays in ratifications, does not augur well for the START process as a disarmament measure. This scenario can lead only to the START process' being perceived as an agreed rationalization of the respective arsenals of the United States and the Russian Federation, rather than a commitment to nuclear disarmament.

In this regard, my delegation remains convinced that it is only through a multilaterally negotiated and internationally agreed and verifiable legal instrument that progress in nuclear disarmament can be achieved. The advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice as regards our obligation, as Members of this Organization, will respect to nuclear disarmament is quite clear.

Like other non-aligned countries, Botswana fully supports the initiative of the Group of 21 and others to commence negotiations on a phased programme on nuclear disarmament. We believe that this proposal represents a most viable approach that could serve us well in the elimination of nuclear weapons in a time-bound framework.

Botswana welcomes the adoption of guidelines for international arms transfers by the Disarmament Commission at its substantive session this year. It has always been our belief and practice that all weapons of war should be left solely in the hands of those charged with the responsibility of ensuring national security, and not be available for possession or use by any other member of the public.

Furthermore, it is the corner-stone of our foreign policy that we should always strive for the development of good- neighbourly relations and non-interference in the affairs of other sovereign States. However, this cannot be done to the detriment of a credible mechanism for self-defence — thus, our commitment to the maintenance of a small, highly disciplined and efficient defence force, and recourse to various bilateral commissions at the subregional level to deal with security issues whenever appropriate. We are confident that through the launching of a Southern African Development Community (SADC) Organ on Politics, Defence and Security, greater latitude has been created for further confidence-building in our region.

In conclusion, during his address to the General Assembly on 4 October, our Minister for Foreign Affairs put forth Botswana's position on anti-personnel landmines. These devices have accurately been defined as "weapons of mass destruction in slow motion". We all are aware of the humanitarian tragedy resulting from their use. It is therefore our contention that the only answer to this menace is a total ban on their production, stockpile, transfer and use. We do not believe that the creation of other mines, supposedly better in the sense that they will self-destruct, is a solution either. This will only add to the efficiency of their irresponsible use, creating more intolerable misery. In that light, my delegation pledges to work cooperatively with

other like-minded delegations on initiatives to ban these devices.

Mr. McCook (Jamaica): On behalf of the 13 member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) that are Members of the United Nations — Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago — I congratulate you, Mr. Chairman, and the members of the Bureau on your election. I wish to assure you of our full support as you discharge your responsibilities. I also wish to pay tribute to your distinguished predecessor, Ambassador Erdenechuluun of Mongolia, for his able guidance of the Committee during the fiftieth session.

The primary goal of this Committee must be the creation of a world in which our children will feel safer and more secure. The deliberations in this Committee are not about abstract issues, because the principal subjects before us concern the horrifying capacity for the destruction of life and property that has been developed over many years. We are here because we have witnessed the terror of war, and the impact of the testing and use of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction on women, men and children. We must never lose sight of this fact as we set about the task of creating instruments to reduce the threat posed to world peace by weapons of war.

We are heartened by the progress that has been made in addressing the problem of nuclear proliferation through successive arms-limitation initiatives, but we recognize that these are inadequate, because we know that one nuclear weapon is one too many. Our task will not be complete until the goal of disarmament on all fronts is achieved.

In his report on the work of the Organization, the Secretary-General addressed a matter of fundamental concern to CARICOM delegations: micro-disarmament. Every year tens of thousands of human beings are killed by small arms in acts of terror and other crimes or conflicts of one sort or another. We welcome the efforts that have been made to provide assistance to small States in curbing the illicit trade in small arms and helping in the collection of these arms. We take note of the symbolic destruction of small arms in Timbuktu, Mali, earlier this year, with the support of the United Nations. These efforts are important to the processes of peacekeeping and conflict prevention and must be encouraged.

The threat posed by the surge in the illicit trade in small arms is particularly troubling to small nations such as ours because of its connection to crime and violence. The nexus between the trade in illicit arms and drug trafficking is especially troubling, as the mix of drug money and arms creates a seriously destabilizing influence on small, vulnerable and open societies. We should not underestimate the capacity of this criminal element to undermine the security and stability of small States.

We urge producer nations to implement firm measures to stem the illicit flow of these weapons. This is an area that requires close international cooperation between the nations that produce these weapons and those victimized by the illicit traffic in them. We agree with the observation in the Secretary-General's report (A/51/1) that the end of the cold war provides an unprecedented opportunity for intervention on this front to control the production, trade, accumulation and use of small arms and light weapons.

CARICOM countries could be forgiven if they treated certain disarmament issues as a distant concern. We have had neither the inclination nor the resources to develop nuclear, biological or chemical weapons. But the very nature of weapons of mass destruction — their capacity for indiscriminate harm — demands that they become the concern of States that are interested in lasting peace and security. It is for this reason that the member States of CARICOM have taken practical steps to oppose the introduction of nuclear weapons to our region.

Member States of CARICOM are committed parties to the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean — the Treaty of Tlatelolco. We welcome the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in Africa, South-East Asia and the South Pacific, and strongly support the initiative of Brazil to submit, at this fifty-first session of the General Assembly, to a draft resolution on a nuclear-weapon-free southern hemisphere.

While maintaining our focus on the issue of nuclear weapons, we must not lose sight of the ingredients that sustain the ability of States to produce these deadly weapons. We urge the international community to take concrete steps to ban the production and stockpiling of fissile material for the production of nuclear weapons. We recognize that, as the Secretary-General's report states,

> "vast stocks of weapons-grade fissile material still pose great risks to the world's people and environment." (*A/51/1, para. 1079*)

We therefore strongly support efforts to implement strict controls over the movement and disposal of fissile materials and nuclear waste.

The issue of the movement of nuclear waste is a matter that has generated great concern and anxiety among the peoples of the Caribbean region, which is heavily dependent on tourism and has a fragile ecosystem. Its citizens are concerned about the potential effect of pollution from nuclear waste that is moved through its waters. At the recent meeting of the Standing Committee of Ministers Responsible for Foreign Affairs of the Caribbean Community, the region's concerns at the dangers of this practice were reiterated. The Foreign Ministers expressed particular alarm that shipments were moved through the region during the hurricane season and at a time of heightened seismic activity in the region, and called upon the international community to respect the concerns expressed in the region about this practice. We welcome the moves by certain States to take proper safeguard measures to better control, manage and secure fissile materials and nuclear waste, and urge continued vigilance in this regard.

We welcome the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which we regard as an important step in the move towards complete nuclear disarmament. However, we urge the international community not to be complacent with this important, but limited, step forward. We must seize the opportunity to tackle the fundamental issue of comprehensive disarmament as a matter of urgency.

We also welcome the move to convene consultations of States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in preparation for the first Preparatory Committee leading to the next NPT Review Conference in the year 2000. We continue to urge the nuclear-weapon States to honour their commitments to the non-proliferation of nuclear arms signified by their adherence to this Treaty.

This year, significant attention will be paid to the issue of anti-personnel landmines. CARICOM countries support the move for a global ban on these lethal and indiscriminate weapons, which continue to maim and kill so many often-unsuspecting civilians — men, women and children. The sad fact is that when peace is achieved and the guns are silenced, these deadly weapons continue to threaten the lives of people at peace. The logic of curtailing the availability and use of weapons that can scarcely be controlled is persuasive, and the international community must act firmly and quickly to address this problem. The moratoriums already declared by certain States augur well for positive action on this important issue. We urge States that produce these landmines to declare and implement a moratorium consistent with the call issued in resolution 50/70, if they have not yet done so.

There are few creations of mankind that are more horrifying than the weapon of disease. The deliberate development of transmitters of deadly diseases as an instrument of war must be brought to an end. We urge States that have these weapons to cooperate in the effort to apply the terms of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction.

We continue to be concerned that the objectives of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction have not yet been achieved. That Convention is important to the disarmament agenda as it provides for transparency, verification and destruction arrangements, which are well overdue.

CARICOM nations believe that the critical task of eliminating weapons of mass destruction must be matched by a resolve to promote sustained economic growth and sustainable development. The tremendous commitment of capital and human resources to the arms race must now be matched by an equal or greater commitment to the well-being of the human race. In this context, we see the need for a continuing dialogue on the relationship between disarmament and development.

The forthcoming special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament should reflect the interrelationship of disarmament, development, peace and security. Without development, peace will remain an elusive goal. The time has come for a commitment to invest our resources in people, not weapons, and in promoting peace, not preparing for war.

I wish to express our concern that the regional centres for peace and disarmament, which can play an important role in promoting the goals of disarmament and peace at the regional level, continue to be beset by resource shortages. The Secretary-General explained in his report (A/51/403) that the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa, Lomé, has had the post of Director frozen, and that the activities of the Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, Lima, have been suspended. We note his

proposal to explore alternative means of financing the Centres and look forward to his report on this initiative in due course.

We urge the international community to take further concrete steps to address the proliferation of destructive weapons. We must commit ourselves to curtailing the flow of all weapons, our ultimate goal being the elimination of weapons of mass destruction from the inventories of each and every nation and the reduction of inventories of conventional weapons to the amounts absolutely necessary for national defence and public safety.

Mr. Akplogan (Benin) (*interpretation from French*): On behalf of the delegation of Benin, I would first like to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the First Committee during the fifty-first session of the United Nations General Assembly.

The commemoration today, 24 October 1996, of the fifty-first anniversary of the entry into force of the United Nations Charter gives my delegation an opportunity to reaffirm Benin's commitment to work for the ideals of peace, development, equality and social justice inscribed in the Charter. The determination expressed in that Charter

> "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war"

is as fundamental today as it was 51 years ago.

In the current international context, characterized by growing interdependence and globalization, it is essential for Member States to show greater political will by intensifying dialogue and joint undertakings and strengthening international cooperation through confidence-building measures, which can reduce tension and the risk of armed confrontation between States.

In this vein, it is encouraging to note that the promotion of international peace and security and disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, are at the forefront of the major concerns of the international community at the end of the twentieth century.

You will no doubt agree with me, Sir, that in order to be real and lasting, peace must be based upon general and complete disarmament under international control. That is why Benin welcomes the recent positive developments in regional and international disarmament.

One year ago, the Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons decided to extend the Treaty for an indeterminate length of time, thereby enhancing prospects for disarmament. Together, we must seek the objective of non-proliferation from all aspects, with a view to ensuring that the Treaty will become a true international tool for effective nuclear disarmament as well as a solid foundation for more productive international cooperation on the utilization of nuclear technology for peaceful purposes on a non-discriminatory basis, and within the context of a system of recognized international guarantees.

The signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty at this session is surely a milestone in achieving nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, key objectives of the international community.

The creation in December 1995 of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in South-East Asia, and the signature on 11 April 1996 of the Pelindaba Treaty for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa, enshrine efforts at the regional level to curb and halt the arms race and build a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Problems related to conventional weapons and especially the proliferation of light weapons, notably anti-personnel landmines, continue to threaten international security. Thus, developing a strategy for the total prohibition of anti-personnel landmines must remain a priority for the international community.

To that end, my delegation warmly welcomes the revision of Protocol II of the Convention on conventional weapons, and particularly the restrictions on the use of landmines. We welcome the efforts of the Disarmament Commission which, after three years of work, has prepared a set of guidelines on international arms transfers and the eradication of illicit arms trafficking.

In view of the consequences of the proliferation of small arms on the peace and stability of many developing countries, our Committee should attach great importance at this session to consideration of means to strengthen participation in the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, established in 1992.

I wish to reiterate my country's support for convening the fourth special session of the United Nations General Assembly devoted to disarmament in 1997. That session will provide an opportunity for all Member States to reinforce the process of general and comprehensive

disarmament, with a view to consolidating international peace and security.

As we approach a new millennium, the problems confronting the international community are many and complex. To solve them, we must commit ourselves, as emphasized in the Declaration on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary, to

> "Promote methods and means for the peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and enhance the capabilities of the United Nations in conflict prevention, preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping and peace-building". *(resolution 50/6, para. 1)*

Mr. Afeto (Togo) (*interpretation from French*): In joining those speakers who have spoken in the general debate, I would like to convey to you my delegation's most earnest congratulations, not only on your election to the presidency of this Committee, but also for the able manner in which you have been leading our work. I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to your predecessor, Ambassador Erdenechuluun of Mongolia, who led our work during the fiftieth session with such tact and skill. Our congratulations also go to the other members of the Bureau, as well as to the new Secretary of our Committee, Mr. Lin, and all his colleagues.

The present session, which is being held immediately after the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, gives us the opportunity to take stock of developments which have taken place in the area of disarmament and international security in the past 12 months.

With regard to this review, my delegation welcomes the signing, in April 1996 in Cairo, of the Pelindaba Treaty and its protocols, making Africa a nuclear-weapon-free zone. We also welcome the many other positive developments, including, among others, the entry into force of the SALT I Treaty, the signing of the SALT II Treaty by the parties concerned, the adoption on 10 September 1996 of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the ratification by 64 States of the Convention banning chemical weapons, which we hope will soon enter into force, and the signing in December 1995 of the Bangkok Treaty, making South-East Asia a nuclear-weapon-free zone.

This long list of positive acts bears witness to the constantly growing interest shown by the community of nations in questions of disarmament, which are considered to be one of the ways that will permit the establishment or safeguarding of international peace and security.

Regarding the CTBT, signed thus far by 126 States, including Togo, and already ratified by a signatory State, my delegation believes that in spite of its drawbacks, which unfortunately prevented its adoption by consensus, the CTBT and its various protocols are an important milestone and an additional outstanding step along the path to nuclear disarmament.

Are there circumstances which, in the eyes of international law, would justify the use or the threat of use of nuclear weapons? Two years ago this question was put by the General Assembly to the International Court of Justice which, in giving its Advisory Opinion, deemed it useful and relevant to draw the attention of the international community to the need to shoulder its obligation

> "to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control". *(A/51/4, para. 182)*

On the basis of this opinion of the Court, my delegation would like to urge the nuclear-weapon States, as well as the Conference on Disarmament, to take all necessary steps to begin, as soon as possible, negotiations leading to the eventual elaboration of a convention on the total prohibition of the use of nuclear weapons.

In the same vein, my delegation invites the Conference to include in its 1997 work programme, and to consider on a priority basis, the question of the elaboration of an international legal instrument that would forever ban the production of fissile material for weapons purposes.

In the area of conventional disarmament, Togo expresses its indignation at the continued use of certain conventional weapons which may be deemed to be excessively injurious or to have indiscriminate effects. This is particularly the case with anti-personnel landmines, which claim tens of thousands of innocent victims every day throughout the world. My delegation welcomes the recent progress leading to the revision and improvement of Protocol II to the 1980 Convention on this type of weapon. Moreover, it salutes the sense of responsibility shown by all the States that, also this year, have decided unilaterally to adopt or to extend moratoria on the export of anti-personnel mines.

Togo invites the international community to take full stock of the danger inherent in these devices and to do its utmost to begin negotiations as soon as possible, within the framework of increased international cooperation, aimed at adopting a convention banning their production, transfer, stockpiling and use. The Government of Togo once again commits itself to supporting any initiative along these lines, as well as all resolutions aimed at strengthening cooperation and coordination of activities in the area of mine-clearing.

The proliferation and illicit transfer of light weapons and small arms also constitute a grave threat to regional and subregional peace and security. Unless concerted and rigorous action is taken against these phenomena, internal or local conflicts, as well as acts of subversion, banditry and vandalism committed or supported using these weapons will continue for a long time to come to compromise the disarmament and development efforts taken by our Governments.

In my delegation's view, the best path to follow in order to eliminate this anarchic proliferation and illicit transfer of conventional weapons would be to strengthen the regional approach to disarmament; the international community is duty bound to give this all the attention it deserves. In this context, it should make greater use of the cooperation and technical collaboration of the United Nations Regional Centres for Peace and Disarmament. These are genuine regional disarmament mechanisms created by the General Assembly and based in Togo for Africa, in Peru for Latin America and the Caribbean, and in Nepal for Asia and the Pacific.

There is no need here to trace the origins of these three institutions. Let us, however, emphasize that in his annual report on the life and activities of Regional Centres in Africa and Latin America, contained in document A/51/403 dated 25 September 1996, the Secretary-General, while deploring the precarious financial situation the Centres are experiencing, once again emphasized the preponderant role that they can play in their regions in confidence-building and the maintenance and consolidation of peace and political stability, as well as in arms limitation and control — activities which, for lack of sufficient financial resources, are not fully implemented.

With particular reference to the Regional Centre for Africa, whose headquarters my country has the honour to host, I am glad to emphasize that in spite of the limited resources available to it, and contrary to previous years, it has managed in the past 12 months to conduct a number of praiseworthy activities. Indeed, during the period under review, the Centre has, in carrying out the mandate entrusted to it by the General Assembly pursuant to resolution 40/151 G of 16 December 1985, continued to disseminate information on peace, disarmament and security. It also organized many meetings at its headquarters for exchanges of views, giving the participants — politicians, representatives of non-governmental organizations, academics and the public in general — an opportunity to consider questions pertaining to peace, disarmament, security and development in Africa.

The Centre has also endeavoured to disseminate as widely as possible its quarterly publication "The African Peace Bulletin", which is issued in French and English and covers the news in this area in the African continent. It should also be noted that after the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, the Officer-in-Charge of the Centre, in response to an invitation from the Government of Togo, organized a series of lectures and discussions for university staff and research workers, dealing exclusively with the subject of "The United Nations faced with peacekeeping challenges". A complete list of the activities conducted by the Lomé Centre since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 50/71 C of 12 December 1995 has been drawn up by the Secretary-General and is contained in paragraphs 12, 13, 14 and 15 of his report.

The Government of Togo and the leadership of the Centre would like in this context to extend their warm gratitude to the Governments of Finland, Norway, Sweden and South Africa, and to the Resident Coordinator for Operational Activities of the United Nations system, as well as to the leadership of the International Labour Organization (ILO) International Training Centre based in Turin, Italy. Their voluntary contributions and technical assistance have allowed the African Centre successfully to carry out all the activities mentioned.

In the conclusion to his report, the Secretary-General emphasizes:

> "Provided that new resources could be secured, the activities of the centres could be reviewed, expanded and adapted to support present challenges". (*A/51/403, para. 20*)

In endorsing these very relevant observations, the Government of Togo joins the Secretary-General in launching once again an urgent appeal to Member States, especially those imbued with goodwill and truly wedded to peace, as well as to international organizations and foundations, to make sufficient voluntary contributions to

the special trust fund set up for that purpose to enable us to revitalize these Centres and make them function effectively for the benefit of regional and global disarmament, peace and security.

A draft resolution on the Regional Centres, including that of Africa, will once again be submitted for consideration by the Committee. My country asks delegations, as in the past, kindly to give this draft resolution all due attention because of the importance of the objectives pursued in the interest of all of humankind.

As the host country, and as was personally emphasized by Mr. Koffi Panou, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of the Togolese Republic, on 2 October 1996 in his statement in plenary, the Government of Togo, which has provided two buildings free of charge to the United Nations for the Centre and for its Director's residence, will continue to do its utmost to honour its commitments to enable this institution to achieve the objectives for which it was created.

International security is a multifaceted phenomenon, and has both military and non-military aspects. In the absence of armed conflict or war, these latter jeopardize peace and tranquillity among our peoples and bring to naught any development effort. Hunger, disease, unemployment and social exclusion are among the scourges which, in our quest for genuine security, should be energetically fought with a view to establishing a genuine climate of peace in our respective States and regions, because peace is necessary for balanced, harmonious and lasting socio-economic development. In this way we would be contributing to the social progress of our peoples and would be helping to build the better world which all of us hold dear.

Mr. Bwakira (Burundi) (*interpretation from French*): It is a pleasure for my delegation that Ambassador Sychou was elected as Chairman of this important Committee. His experience and personal qualities guarantee success in our work; I warmly congratulate him and the other members of the Bureau. I pledge the cooperation of the Burundi delegation in the discharge of the Chairman's duties.

Fifty years have elapsed since the General Assembly, in its very first resolution, appealed for the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. This appeal is still relevant today, even though the post-cold-war period gave us a narrow window of opportunity for achieving the objective of ridding the world of nuclear weapons. That opportunity must be used to work towards complete nuclear disarmament.

In this respect, my delegation takes pleasure in saluting the progress which has recently been made in disarmament matters: adoption of the Chemical Weapons Convention, and its verification arrangements, the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the creation of new nuclear-weapon-free zones, the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), and the signature of Protocols to the inhumane-weapons Convention on landmines and blinding laser weapons. Yet much remains to be done before general and complete nuclear disarmament is achieved. We must also prohibit the production of other weapons based upon fissile material and ensure that the Biological Weapons Convention is respected.

Insofar as nuclear-weapon-free zones are concerned, in Africa in particular, Burundi is pleased to note the conclusion in April 1996 of the Pelindaba Treaty. This Treaty finally creates a denuclearized zone on the African continent. Nuclear-weapon-free zones in South-East Asia, in Latin America and in Africa constitute a stride forward towards turning the southern hemisphere into a broad denuclearized zone, with a view to ensuring that half of the globe is spared the nuclear spectre; the northern hemisphere too will gradually be freed from this spectre as well. The international community must move forward to ensure that the nuclear threat no longer looms over humankind.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons must be universally signed, and the Convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons must come into effect as 64 States have already ratified it. For it to be effective, and to have the desired positive effects however, the two major producers and possessors of chemical weapons must ratify the Convention.

In my delegation's view, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty is of great importance in international relations. Burundi, which is a signatory, hopes it will speedily come into effect. Of course, no one has any illusions as to its limits. In this connection, my delegation believes that the Advisory Opinion handed down by the International Court of Justice is very important. It stipulates that the threat or use of nuclear weapons is contrary to the provisions of international law applicable to armed conflict and in particular the principles and rules of humanitarian law. The nuclear Powers should begin negotiations on an international treaty to halt and prohibit the development and production of all nuclear weapons and, ultimately, to

destroy all nuclear weapons arsenals, with a view to ensuring that the world is free of nuclear weapons.

Besides the challenges before us in the field of nuclear weapons, there are also conventional weapons, which are no less worrisome. The possessors of conventional weapons of mass destruction must dismantle them. The production and trafficking in conventional weapons and the excessive expenditures of some States in procuring light weaponry result in an arms race which fans conflicts in some parts of the world. In some areas of the world where conflicts exist, the illicit traffic of conventional weapons should be strictly monitored. Particular attention should be given to anti-personnel landmines, which cause considerable damage. Demining requires substantial financial and technical assistance. I am pleased that the international community is moving towards prohibition of anti-personnel landmines.

Other measures should be adopted regionally to strengthen or rebuild confidence among States in the same region or subregion. This is the case for Central Africa — one of the five subregions of Africa, where each subregion has its own characteristics and requires that machinery should be established to contribute to regional disarmament and to ensure international peace and security — indispensable factors for economic and social development.

Resources released as a result of disarmament measures should be devoted to the development we all seek. To achieve this objective, there must be a climate of mutual confidence among States, as well as within each State. Burundi welcomes the Secretary-General's establishment on 28 May 1992 of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. On 8 July 1996 my country participated in the first summit of Heads of State or Government of the countries members of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa.

Mr. García (Colombia), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The signing on that occasion of a non-aggression pact between the member States of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa was an important and timely event in the light of the conflicts pitting State against State and community against community in the various countries.

In Burundi, an outright war between Government forces on the one side and militias and armed bands on the other has, in the last three years, left thousands dead and caused tremendous destruction. The genocide that took place in Rwanda in 1994 would have repeated itself in Burundi this year if all the living forces of the nation, and all ethnic groups, had not called for and won a change of regime on 25 July 1996.

President Pierre Buyoya's return to power was not a military *coup d'état* but a rescue mission for a nation in distress and on the verge of extinction. The Government that fell on 25 January was unable to restore order or ensure the security of all citizens, or even of foreigners living in Burundi, and external militias and armed bands were killing peaceful citizens and looting their property. The new regime has made it a priority to restore security for all and peace throughout the national territory.

It is therefore incomprehensible that neighbouring States are imposing an embargo by air, land and water — a total blockade — on Burundi. The new regime has met all the conditions set by the States that imposed the embargo. It has reinstated the Parliament, it has authorized political parties to resume their activities and it has committed itself to negotiating with all national partners, including armed factions.

Since all of these conditions have been met, the illegal, brutal and massive economic sanctions imposed on Burundi by the neighbouring countries should be lifted because the country is on the verge of suffocation and the suffering of innocent people is indescribable; famine is imminent; and diseases such as meningitis and cholera are epidemic due to a lack of medication.

The total economic blockade of Burundi is a war every bit as terrible as that waged by weapons. It must be lifted in the interest of peace and security in the subregion if we are to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe in Burundi.

Mr. Abulhasan (Kuwait) (*interpretation from Arabic*): At the outset, allow me to congratulate the Chairman on his election to preside over the First Committee at this session. I wish him and the members of the Bureau every success in carrying out their duties.

Based on our belief that world peace is an indivisible whole and that the consequences and effects of global security are interlinked, it is our view that it is extremely important to strengthen cooperation among members of the international community because the challenges of tomorrow are unlike those of yesterday. The hopes generated by the end of the cold war have dissipated in the midst of turmoil and what can best be described as delicate

and sensitive new international situations. Every day we see an increase in contradictions — national conflicts, dislocation, separation, domination and the challenges posed by some to the will of the Security Council, to international legitimacy and to the resolution of the international community. This has disrupted international relations and created mutual suspicion, creating obstacles on the path to growth and development, and makes us question whether the benefits of science really have led to a better world — a world of peace and stability — or the contrary.

The adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and its opening for signature during this session constitute a major step towards attaining the priority objective of the international community in the field of disarmament. It is also a confirmation of the commitment to the Principles and Objectives for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament contained in the final Document of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which was adopted on 11 may 1995, at the conclusion of the Conference.

Kuwait, as one of the signatories of the CTBT, calls for a speedy entry into force of the Treaty. No action should be taken that might contravene the principles of the Treaty prior to its entry into force.

The proliferation of conventional weapons and the scrambling by States to increase their military arsenals are a source of concern and anxiety. Serious international cooperation is needed so that the necessary measures can be taken to put an end to such phenomena. Important measures should be taken to protect and safeguard international peace and security and promote confidence-building between States and peoples. These should include measures aimed at supporting and promoting the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms, so that it can serve as a mechanism for bringing about a reduction in military expenditures and a transfer of the resources released to support the development process in developing countries.

My delegation is deeply concerned at the issue of landmines. The damage they inflict is not limited to armed forces or to conflict situations between States; it goes far beyond that, threatening the peace and security of peoples in various parts of the world. The Kuwaiti people are still suffering from the enormous numbers of landmines planted by the Iraqi regime when it invaded Kuwait. Day in, day out, we hear of accidents caused by landmines, the victims of which are innocent people. My delegation therefore, fully supports all international efforts aimed at putting an end to the production and export of such mines and at a situation in which the violating countries would assume full responsibility for the civilian damage resulting from such landmines.

World security is an interlinked system, and I commend the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the world. My delegation welcomes the formulation and signature by the countries of South-East Asia of the Treaty of Bangkok in December 1995. With this Treaty, a nuclear-weapon-free zone has been created in South-East Asia. We also welcome the fact that China, France, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States have signed the Protocols of the Treaty of Rarotonga, by which a nuclear-weapon-free zone was created in the South Pacific. We highly commend the formulation by the African countries of the Pelindaba Treaty and its signature on 11 April 1996, which created a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa. We believe that the establishment of these new nuclear-weapon-free zones and the cooperation of the nuclear-weapon States in supporting the relevant protocols will promote the creation of further such zones.

Establishing the Middle East as a nuclear-weapon-free zone is a noble objective shared by all the Arab countries. In that connection, the Secretary-General reports that

> "since my last report the views of the main parties in the region ... on ... the establishment of the zone, have not evolved any further." *(A/51/286, para. 5)*

This is indeed a source of anxiety and concern. Responsibility for the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons lies with the major nuclear Powers. Therefore, my delegation calls on the international community to place pressure on Israel to sign the NPT and to subject its nuclear facilities to IAEA safeguards. Israel is the only country in the area with a nuclear capability that has not yet signed the NPT.

My delegation does not call only for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East. We call also for the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, including biological, chemical and other such weapons; this would help defuse the tension and instability in that vital part of the world. That region has suffered from brutal and savage conflicts for many years, most recently Iraq's wanton and brutal invasion of Kuwait, and the continuous threat to neighbouring countries posed

by the Iraqi regime's use of chemical and biological weapons against its own people in northern Iraq.

I commend the efforts of the Special Commission established in accordance with Security Council resolution 687 (1991), and in particular to commend and thank its Executive Chairman, Ambassador Rolf Ekéus. These efforts are laying the foundation for security and stability in the Gulf region in order to guarantee the rights of the peoples of the area to live in real peace and security.

Mr. Abou-Hadid (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): First of all, allow me to convey to you, Sir, on behalf of the Syrian delegation, our most sincere congratulations on your assumption of the chairmanship of this Committee. We are certain that your experience and political wisdom will enable us to succeed in our work. We also congratulate the other members of the Bureau.

Since the end of the cold war, far-reaching changes have occurred on the international scene, especially in the area of relations between States. Unfortunately, these have not been accompanied by concrete positive changes in the area of disarmament and international security. To the contrary, tensions have increased in many parts of the world and have intensified human suffering because of a resurgence of the arms race with the attendant death, exodus, "ethnic cleansing" and famine. The United Nations must deal with an increasing number of conflicts; our Organization could have well done without these.

Confidence has been eroded. Political will is needed to deal with international problems on an equal footing. There has been a lack of respect for political will, the sovereignty of States and regions, and non-interference in the internal affairs of States. There has thus been a resurgence of tension and conflict among States, posing a threat to international peace and security.

The current international situation requires that we reconsider how we deal with disarmament problems. We believe that nuclear-weapon States and other States with a nuclear capacity should review their policies, strategies and military doctrines — doctrines adopted during the cold war — and that these States should reject the policy of nuclear deterrence. These States should dismantle their death-dealing arsenals for the greater benefit of mankind as a whole and should not hide behind flimsy pretexts that are without validity but that enable these States to retain these weapons despite the new criteria of international relations, which require that we eliminate these weapons sooner or later.

From the outset, my country welcomed disarmament initiatives, including those aimed at eliminating weapons of mass destruction and has urged that nuclear weapons be reduced with a view to achieving the complete elimination of these weapons and to putting an end to the arms race.

The Chairman returned to the Chair.

My country has supported efforts to halt the production of fissile materials for such weapons, believing that a complete ban is the best way to achieve nuclear disarmament and a non-proliferation regime.

The international community worked tirelessly for more than 40 years to ban all nuclear tests. That ban is not an end in itself but is merely one way to achieve nuclear disarmament. We should also ensure that the ban is comprehensive in the truest sense of the word. A treaty that does not ban all nuclear tests in all their forms, which does not put an end to qualitative improvements, in nuclear weapons, and which permits nuclear-weapon States to continue their nuclear weapons improvement programmes through electronic means cannot be considered a comprehensive test-ban treaty. If we do not place the Treaty in its proper context of nuclear disarmament, it will be devoid of any meaning and international thrust it might have.

My country believes that the Conference on Disarmament is the most suitable body for discussing disarmament problems in all their aspects and for conducting negotiations. For that reason, Syria once again thanks those States that helped a group of 23 States including my own, to join the Conference on Disarmament as full members. We are confident that the admission of these States, soon to be joined by others, will increase the democratic nature of the Conference. Our admission to the Conference will enable us to contribute more effectively to realize the dreams of mankind: disarmament; the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, especially nuclear weapons; reducing tensions throughout the world; and putting an end to the hegemonistic policies, aggression and territorial expansion practised by some States backed by their military superiority and nuclear threats in the belief that the possession of such weapons ensures their security, but forgetting that the real path to security necessarily involves peace itself.

Syria was among the first States in the Middle East to sign the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), in 1968; we were also among the first to ask in 1989 for the creation in the Middle East of a zone free of all weapons of mass destruction — nuclear, chemical or biological — under United Nations auspices. However, Israel has lent a deaf ear to all those appeals and to the appeals of the United Nations, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Non-Aligned Movement and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. Israel's possession of nuclear weapons in our crucial region is in itself a source of concern and a real danger, not just to the peoples of the region, but also to the peoples of the world. We and other States in the region have cautioned against the dangers inherent in Israel's possession of nuclear weapons and in its refusal to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to submit its nuclear facilities to international safeguards. Syria welcomes the accession of the United Arab Emirates and Djibouti to that Treaty, as well as the recent decision of the Sultanate of Oman to accede. The fact that, alone among the States of the region, Israel remains outside the framework of the Treaty and refuses to submit its nuclear facilities to international safeguards is, to our great regret, a source of concern and among the factors for instability and insecurity in the region.

We reaffirm that the international community must urge Israel to accede to the NPT to enable the States of the Middle East truly to transform their region into a nuclear-weapon-free zone and a zone free of all other weapons of mass destruction.

It is time that the Middle East enjoyed peace and stability and was able to focus on economic, social and environmental development in the region. That cannot be achieved through piecemeal solutions or a piecemeal peace; nor can it be achieved through agreements that are contrary to the interests and rights of peoples and nations. Israel is turning its back on the resolutions of the international community and on the rule of law, in spite of negotiations of more than 5 years. That is an affront to the Organization and to the international community.

The recent developments in the peace process, especially following the Israeli elections, have reconfirmed the current Israeli Government's rejection of a just and comprehensive peace that would end conflict, occupation and settlement policies, enabling the restoration of rights to the legitimate owners.

We support peace and stability for all. The United States initiative that gave rise to the Madrid Conference was aimed at the attainment of a just and comprehensive peace in the region based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and the principle of land for peace. On that basis, Syria helped open the doors to peace. My country has repeatedly reaffirmed at the highest level its strategic decision to devote itself to peace on the basis of the peace process. Leaders of the meeting at their recent Cairo summit reaffirmed before the world that their choice for peace is a strategic option that required Israel's prompt and unambiguous commitment as well: a commitment by Israel founded on the bases and principles of commitments entered into during negotiations over the past five years.

The refusal of Israel in absolute terms, and in the face of all the bases for peace, is a threat to the peace process — a process that has been anticipated and encouraged by States the world over. International public opinion will not allow, and should not allow, these activities and practices on the part of the Israeli Government, which are hindering the peace process and may put the region on the brink of explosion.

In conclusion, I would like to ask the following question of those who are gathered here. Should those who are without such weapons be the ones to give assurances to those who have one of the greatest nuclear arsenals? Does the international community really find itself powerless to urge those who have these nuclear weapons, which threaten others, to accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, whereas the same international community managed to extend this Treaty? I think that with such an imbalance, peace and security in the region cannot be achieved. The answer to these questions requires that we show forthrightness, good faith and serious-mindedness, so that we can achieve complete disarmament without any exception.

Mr. Vilchez Asher (Nicaragua) (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of my delegation I would like to extend to you, Sir, our congratulations on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. We are convinced that with your experience and well-known diplomatic skill, we will succeed in our work. We also congratulate Ambassador Erdenechuluun of Mongolia for his efficiency and dedication at the last session.

This year we have witnessed significant progress in the field of non-proliferation and disarmament. First and foremost was the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-

Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), which without doubt constitutes a substantial step towards our goal of completely abolishing nuclear weapons from the globe. It was for that reason that Nicaragua signed this Treaty on the first day it was open for signature.

Nicaragua also welcomes the signing of the Treaties of Bangkok and Pelindaba, which together with the Treaty of Tlatelolco will contribute to achieving a more secure world free from the threat of nuclear weapons. We look forward to the entry into force of another important instrument, the Chemical Weapons Convention. At the same time, we would like to emphasize the importance of its attaining universal application. Nicaragua has signed the Convention and is taking the necessary steps to ensure its prompt ratification. My delegation considers that the prompt conclusion of a treaty banning the production of fissile materials for nuclear weapons, together with the entry into force of the CTBT, will undoubtedly facilitate progress on the always difficult but still practicable path towards more effective nuclear disarmament.

Nicaragua heard with great pleasure of the unanimous opinion of the International Court of Justice that

> "There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control." (*A/51/4, para. 182*)

Since the end of the cold war, the international community has increasingly encouraged the search for regional solutions to regional problems. In this regard, the regional centres for peace, disarmament and development have an important role to play in the new international circumstances, which call for greater security and information and stronger institutions. For this reason, we deplore the suspension of the work of the Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, in Lima, due to a reduction in voluntary contributions. We hope that it will resume its activities in the near future.

We would also like express our deep concern at the ready availability of conventional weapons, and in particular for their illicit and unbridled transfer, which is frequently related to destabilizing activities. This is a most worrisome and dangerous phenomenon. We would like to acknowledge the work of the Disarmament Commission in this area, and in particular its adoption of the document entitled "Guidelines for international arms transfers in the context of General Assembly resolution 46/36 H of 6 December 1991". This document provides an important frame of reference for combating this phenomenon, which, paradoxically, is growing in scale every day.

The international community showed its concern at the last General Assembly session when it adopted resolution 50/70 H, entitled "Assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and collecting them". We now urge the international community to give appropriate support to action by the countries concerned to eradicate illicit traffic in small arms, which, among other factors, is an obstacle to development and, we are convinced, to the consolidation of peace.

It is not enough simply to wish to put an end to the use of anti-personnel landmines. In this context, Nicaragua would like once again to reiterate that the only way to eliminate this scourge is to prohibit it completely. We are convinced that only an international system that prohibits anti-personnel landmines, backed by concrete and periodic monitoring measures, will ever allow us effectively to wipe out this class of detectable and undetectable devices.

Another way to ensure transparency and achieve this objective would be to set up a registry of anti-personnel landmines, as proposed by the Norwegian delegation. If we managed to establish a Register of Conventional Arms, why should there not be one for anti-personnel landmines? Nicaragua, in its capacity as current secretariat of the group of Central American countries and on behalf of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, gives its support to that proposal, as we believe that it is a concrete step towards effectively controlling the use, transfer and indiscriminate production of landmines.

In the same spirit, a regional seminar entitled "Anti-personnel landmines, demining and rehabilitation" was held in Managua, Nicaragua, on 28 and 29 May 1996. Anti-personnel landmines were identified as being contrary to international humanitarian law. Mexico and other Central American countries showed a willingness to establish on their territories a zone free from anti-personnel landmines, thereby reaffirming the commitment of the Governments of the region to promote national policies advocating a complete and immediate ban on the production, possession, transfer and use of landmines. The participating countries also called upon their national parliaments to pass legislation banning and penalizing the production, possession, transfer and use of these mines and to establish a standard framework guaranteeing employment opportunities for victims of such devices.

In the same sense, at the twenty-sixth regular session of the Organization of American States held in the Republic of Panama in June 1996, a resolution was adopted on support for demining in Central America, which emphasized the lasting and serious problem of landmines and their consequences in this region.

In line with this, recently the Council of Central American Ministers for Foreign Affairs, meeting in Guatemala on 12 September, decided to declare Central America a landmine-free zone, in which the production, possession, procurement and transfer of these devices were prohibited and sanctioned. Another important decision adopted in the same resolution was to encourage constitutional arrangements to ensure that all Central American countries promptly ratify or adhere to the 1981 Conventional Weapons Convention and its additional protocols. Governments from outside the region that had so far not done so were also urged to take similar initiatives. At the same time, the Council reiterated its call to the international community to continue to provide its firm and valuable support to the work of demining in Central America. In this regard, we would like to salute the Mexican-Canadian cooperation project for the rehabilitation of victims of anti-personnel landmines in Central America.

The Central American process has come a long way since the five Presidents entered into the Esquipulas II commitments and first established the "Procedure for a Firm and Lasting Peace in Central America". As the Secretary-General indicated in his report on the situation in Central America (A/51/338), for the first time for decades, not one of its countries is plagued by internal conflict, and it is presented with the challenge of fulfilling the promise of peace.

The mid-point of the 1990s coincides with a very important moment in the Central American region, which has been designated by the Presidents and the United Nations General Assembly as a region of peace, freedom, democracy and development. Today all the Governments have been elected democratically and have shown their commitment to stability, to promoting human rights and to social and economic development. On 20 October in Nicaragua we held presidential, legislative and municipal elections. During those elections, the Nicaraguan people demonstrated their sense of civic duty by coming to vote in the voting booths, showing thereby their commitment to democracy and their determination to participate fully in this process — in which there was more than 80 per cent participation, showing once again that Nicaragua has chosen the ballot box instead of weapons to elect its leaders.

Nicaragua, a country that was a victim of war and violence for more than a decade, reiterates its commitment to general and complete disarmament, which it has demonstrated by substantially reducing its armed forces and by giving unambiguous support to all measures aimed at achieving such an objective. In this spirit, we have signed and are in the process of ratifying important international disarmament instruments. As humanity approaches the end of the twentieth century, we are committed to peace and development.

The prospects for humanity in the coming years are promising, but also daunting. But we remain committed to building a juster world in which equity and justice prevail, a world in which future generations can live in peace with themselves and in security.

Mr. Osman (Afghanistan): At the outset I would like to extend my congratulations to you, Sir, on your election as Chairman of the First Committee. My delegation pledges its full cooperation so that the First Committee will achieve substantive progress under your able guidance. I also want to express my congratulations to the other member of the Bureau and to Ambassador Erdenechuluun who conducted the work of the Committee successfully during the previous session.

Since the inception of the United Nations, international peace and security, and saving nations from the scourge of war and devastation, have been among the fundamental goals of this Organization. Many promises and pledges have been made in this regard, but only a few have been kept and fulfilled. War, conflict, a tense and chaotic situation, and violations of fundamental human rights due to the intervention by other States still prevail in my country and in our region of Central and South Asia.

More than two years ago, a new phenomenon, the so-called Taliban, emerged on the Afghan scene as a new armed mercenary group. While continuing to strengthen and mobilize, and to receive support from and maintain links to the outside, this group's ambiguous ideology and agenda are clearly violating every norm and principle of democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms. The group's actions have caused the countries of the region to have serious concerns about their far-reaching security, as well as the geopolitical implications. It is worth mentioning that tranquillity and stability in Afghanistan have been a

source of peace for Asia, and its disturbance and continued conflict would create turbulence in the entire region.

It is an undeniable fact that the mercenary group possesses the potential and capability to impede the implementation of any peace process in the country. The Taliban have never acknowledged nor supported the peace-making efforts of the United Nations. Their many declarations in favour of military hegemony as a solution to the Afghan problem are well known and documented.

Our nation, like those of many small countries, has attached great importance to the United Nations and the United Nations Charter. Afghanistan has been a pioneer in the Non-Alignment Movement and played a crucial role in bringing an end to the cold war. Article 2, paragraph 7 of the United Nations Charter explicitly prohibits interference in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any State. The recent aggression and armed intervention of the Taliban have jeopardized the national sovereignty of Afghanistan. The supply of illicit conventional arms to the mercenaries by outside circles was a major factor in their invasion of the capital city, Kabul, and has contributed heavily to terrorist activities in the region. These mercenaries are not only recruited but also armed by foreign States. In other cases, mercenaries already active are receiving illicit arms from abroad. In this regard, my delegation supports the ratification of the International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries which was adopted in 1989 by the General Assembly. We urge other delegations to ratify the Convention. I also urge the distinguished delegates to support the draft resolution on "Measures to curb the illicit transfer and use of conventional arms", which is designed to lead to complete disarmament.

There are reports that chemical weapons have been used by the Taliban in the latest fighting in Afghanistan and have caused massive and brutal killing. We strongly condemn this inhuman act by the Taliban, and we call upon all concerned international humanitarian organizations to investigate this matter. My delegation urges as many States as possible to ratify the Chemical Weapons Convention. Unless the development, production and stockpiling of chemical and biological weapons are banned, the necessary conditions for international security will not be met.

Landmines, which the Secretary-General's report of 3 November 1995 called

> "a weapon of mass destruction in slow motion" (*A/50/701, para. 5*)

have been widely planted in Afghanistan. Out of the 100 million anti-personnel landmines in the world, there are about 10 million in Afghanistan. Mines are used indiscriminately and as a result many innocent civilians have been maimed or lost their lives. Landmines have disrupted everyday life in Afghanistan. Their impact on agriculture, livestock and transportation is immense. Afghanistan's roads have been devastated by landmines, and being a landlocked country, Afghanistan is very dependent on its transit routes.

We recognize and appreciate the efforts of the United Nations, concerned States and non-governmental organizations for their demining assistance, but there is more to be done, especially in the fields of rehabilitating victims, clearing mines and developing the better techniques required to clear the 10 million landmines which have been planted by the Taliban or the former Soviet Union. We commend the efforts and active participation of Canada in organizing and hosting the International Strategy Conference, and we appreciate the very substantial and fruitful results of the Conference.

In the course of the last two years we have seen some achievements in reducing the threat of nuclear confrontation. The indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was a significant step towards the prevention of nuclear confrontation. But we would like to see more achievements, especially with regard to the United Nations regional centres for peace, disarmament and development in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Support for such centres is vital for the maintenance of peace and for making further progress in developing countries. We regard the Kathmandu process as useful; and similar undertakings would contribute to enhanced cooperation and confidence-building between nations.

I would like to conclude by assuring the Committee of Afghanistan's total commitment to peace and stability in the region and in the world. We call upon the international community to work together to achieve these objectives. We must continue to build upon this progress towards the realization of a safer world.

Mr. Mohammad (Brunei Darussalam): On behalf of my delegation, I offer you, Sir, our warmest congratulations on your assumption of the chairmanship of this Committee. Our congratulations go also to the other

members of the Bureau. I wish to assure you that my delegation will give you its full support and cooperation.

The 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty in September this year have given us renewed optimism for the prospects of nuclear disarmament. Brunei Darussalam endorsed the General Assembly resolution on the CTBT, and my delegation is of the view that its signing represents an important first step towards worldwide nuclear disarmament.

As you are aware, Brunei Darussalam, together with nine South-East Asian countries, signed the South-East Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty in December 1995. The Treaty calls upon the nuclear Powers to accede to the Protocol of the Treaty. We therefore urge all nuclear-weapon States to support this Treaty as a commitment to peace and security in our region.

My delegation is also encouraged by the establishment of other nuclear-weapon-free zones: the Treaty of Pelindaba for Africa, the Treaty of Tlatelolco for Latin America and the Caribbean, and the Treaty of Raratonga for the South Pacific. The establishment of these nuclear-weapon-free zones is a testimony to the determination and genuine aspirations of the peoples of the various regions to be free of the nuclear threat. Brunei Darussalam welcomes the initiative of Brazil aimed at establishing a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the southern hemisphere and adjacent areas to further strengthen the existing nuclear-weapon-free zones, thus gradually freeing the whole southern hemisphere and adjacent areas of such weapons.

My delegation welcomes the recent advisory opinion delivered by the International Court of Justice on the *Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons*. The Court concluded unanimously that

> "There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control." (*A/51/4, para. 182*)

My delegation believes this to be an important development in disarmament and that it provides valuable support for those of us who maintain that nuclear weapons need to be totally and immediately eliminated.

In conclusion, my delegation and I wish to express our strong hope that the international community will seize the opportunity now presented to it and speed up the process of disarmament.

Mr. Takht-Ravanchi (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset allow me to congratulate you, Sir, on your well-deserved election as Chairman of the First Committee. I would also like to express my delegation's sincere gratitude to your predecessor, Ambassador Erdenechuluun of Mongolia, who conducted the proceedings of the Committee at the fiftieth session of the General Assembly in such an exemplary manner. Let me also take this opportunity to extend my congratulations to the other members of the Bureau.

A number of disarmament and arms-control developments in the past two years have brought nuclear disarmament back to centre stage. The 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons reminded the nuclear-weapon States of their 1968 commitments under the Treaty, in particular under its article VI, which calls for negotiations in good faith on nuclear disarmament at an early date. General Assembly resolution 50/70 P on nuclear disarmament, sponsored by a number of non-aligned countries during the United Nations fiftieth-anniversary session, called upon the Conference on Disarmament to establish an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament in early 1996. In a historic and unanimous advisory opinion, the International Court of Justice recognized that

> "There exists an obligation to pursue in good faith and bring to a conclusion negotiations leading to nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict and effective international control". (*A/51/4, para. 182*)

The non-aligned members of the newly expanded Conference on Disarmament adopted a programme of action for nuclear disarmament in a time-bound framework. The adoption of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty by an overwhelming majority of Member States — aside from the Treaty's shortcomings and the manner in which it was adopted — was perceived to be a step towards nuclear disarmament. The establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in Africa and South-East Asia, and the consolidation of existing nuclear-weapon-free zones, have also intensified the global move towards creating a world free from nuclear weapons.

Despite these developments, however, there is no indication that the nuclear-weapon States are moving towards nuclear disarmament. They objected adamantly to an extension of the non-proliferation Treaty that ensured

greater accountability. They vetoed the establishment of an ad hoc committee in the Conference on Disarmament on nuclear disarmament, as called for in General Assembly resolution 50/70 P. In the International Court of Justice, they argued along with some of their close allies for legitimacy of nuclear weapons. They agreed to a treaty to ban nuclear explosions only when they had developed non-explosive ways of improving and ensuring the quality of their nuclear weapons, as well as of developing new types of such weapons. Even on the bilateral front — their preferred venue for conducting negotiations — there has been no progress. The START II process is in limbo. There is no prospect for a START III, or for the participation of other nuclear-weapon States in the process. Certain nuclear-weapon States have declared that they are maintaining the option of using nuclear weapons against uncertain and non-nuclear threats. Some threatening revisions have also been made in their nuclear policies and doctrines. The support that nuclear-weapon States are expressing for nuclear-weapon-free zones is guided by their basic assumption that such zones are really only instruments for promoting the horizontal proliferation of nuclear weapons.

These developments in the nuclear field are paralleled by similar developments in other areas. The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) is about to enter into force without the two declared major possessors of chemical weapons. This sheds some doubt on the CWC as a disarmament instrument. It also undermines the authority and effectiveness of the Convention. It was in response to this situation that my country circulated a working paper in The Hague in June 1996 containing a number of ideas, including a call for convening a conference of signatory States to urge the United States and the Russian Federation to ratify the Convention as soon as possible.

This development, along with a lack of progress in the work of the Preparatory Commission to find solutions for a number of outstanding issues, including article XI dealing with economic and technological cooperation, has created a sense of frustration and pessimism over the future role of the Convention. It should be recalled that, in the view of an overwhelming majority of developing nations that do not possess chemical weapons, the CWC offers only a promise of enhanced economic and technological cooperation in the field of chemical materials and technology. This concern was duly recognized in the Final Declaration of the Eleventh Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Countries, held at Cartagena. These developments have to be addressed effectively at this session.

I now turn to the issue of strengthening the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention (BWC). This Convention has not provided a verification mechanism. There is an agreement in principle to negotiate a verification protocol to the Convention. The Ad Hoc Group of Governmental Experts to Identify and Examine Potential Verification Measures from a Scientific and Technical Standpoint has come up with an illustrative set of measures. These should be further examined in depth so that the Committee can finish its work successfully before the Fourth Review Conference of the States Parties to the BWC. A closely related issue to this process is the provisions of the Convention on peaceful cooperation in the toxin and biological fields, which have wide civilian uses and therefore have to be carefully safeguarded. Otherwise, the envisaged protocol might not receive wide adherence among developing nations.

In light of the constant support of the United Nations for the establishment of a nuclear-free-zone in the Middle East, it is necessary now to take constructive and practical measures towards its realization. Israel's reported possession of nuclear weapons and its refusal to accept the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) obligations and International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards have a grave destabilizing effect in the Middle East. The resolution of this problem is essential to diminishing nuclear-threat perceptions in the region. Iran, for its part, has pursued the realization of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and, as an original Party to the NPT, the BWC, the CWC and other arms-control agreements, has complied with its obligations under these instruments.

The reckless build-up of conventional weapons has not only devoured much-needed resources, but also reinforced the atmosphere of mistrust and anxiety. Different areas have, as a result, become fair ground for political, economic and commercial exploitation by countries and companies that manufacture weapons. In the post-cold-war era, in particular, the reductions in national defence spending by most major arms-exporting nations have forced the arms industries to seek foreign weapons contracts to replace declining domestic orders. For such sales to materialize and to ensure the sustainability of arms industries and foreign orders, the creation of tension and confrontation in sensitive regions, such as the Middle East and the Persian Gulf, has vigorously been pursued by extra-Regional powers.

In this regard, the Islamic Republic of Iran, while attaching importance to the United Nations Register of

Conventional Arms as a confidence-building measure, believes that the Register has not been able to control the destabilizing accumulation of conventional arms in various regions. Moreover, there is no evidence that the Register has led to self-restraint in the transfer of conventional weapons. We hope that the group of governmental experts to be established by the Secretary-General in 1997 will make an assessment on this issue as well as on ways and means of promoting transparency in nuclear weapons and related aspects, as envisaged in resolution 46/36 L.

The problem of conventional arms control in the Middle East can therefore effectively be addressed through a set of confidence-building measures, including but not limited to the elimination of the foreign forces in the region; self-restraint in the transfer of advanced weaponry to the region by the largest producers of conventional arms; the reduction of military budgets at the regional level; and serious and genuine international cooperation for a comprehensive, non-discriminatory and balanced reduction of conventional arms in the region. The Islamic Republic of Iran, as the country with the lowest defence budget in the region and with the least weapons purchases, is ready to engage in any genuine initiative in this regard.

There are currently some uncertainties as to the future agenda and direction of the disarmament machinery, namely, the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, the First Committee, the Disarmament Commission, the Conference on Disarmament, the Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean, the Centre for Disarmament Affairs, and so on. For this reason, my delegation proposes to convene a special meeting of a resumed session of the First Committee to consider seriously and in depth various aspects of this important issue with a view to making a number of meaningful recommendations.

Pending such a meeting, I should like briefly to address the issue of the next year's agendas of the three main disarmament bodies. In recent years, there has been an interest in breathing fresh air into the agenda of the First Committee. Micro-disarmament is an example. My delegation, in principle, has no problem with this trend so long as it does not change the disarmament priorities established in the Final Document of the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in 1978.

Shortly after the conclusion of the work of the First Committee, the organizational meeting of the Disarmament Commission is going to decide on the agenda of the substantive session of the Commission in 1997. We hope that consultations on this issue will lead to the adoption of three concrete, timely and meaningful items. We recall the understanding reached at the most recent session of the Disarmament Commission to have the nuclear-weapon-free zone as an item next year. Transparency in nuclear weapons and related aspects is another possible item which could be examined. At its latest session in spring 1996, the Disarmament Commission had a constructive exchange of views on the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, leading to the adoption of a non-paper that summarizes usefully some of the basic understandings reached on this issue. Whether or not we consider this item further in next year's session of the Disarmament Commission will depend on the contents and the direction of the resolution concerning the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, which we are going to consider at the current session of the First Committee. We are convinced that in-depth, substantive preparation will ensure the success of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Therefore, it is necessary that we set in motion the preparatory process in January 1997.

I also take this opportunity to express the satisfaction of my delegation with the successful outcome of the most recent session of the Disarmament Commission on two items: the international transfer of arms and the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. This was made possible in part through the effective leadership of Ambassador Hoffman of Germany, the Chairman of the Commission, and his colleagues.

It is earnestly hoped that the Conference on Disarmament, in the first part of its annual session in 1997, will establish two ad hoc committees, one on a comprehensive convention on the prohibition of fissile materials for nuclear-weapon purposes and the other on a comprehensive convention on the prohibition of nuclear weapons. The possibility of one ad hoc committee on nuclear weapons with a mandate to negotiate several nuclear-related items could also be considered. A strong international consensus has been created for the start of such negotiations and we hope that the Conference on Disarmament lives up to these expectations.

The first preparatory session for the Review and Extension Conference of the States Parties to the NPT in the year 2000 will be convened in New York in April 1997. This is a significant first step of a new review process of the Treaty. The new Preparatory Committee is a mini-review conference that considers all substantive

issues. In this regard, it is highly desirable that informal consultations be conducted among the States Parties with a view better to prepare for the Preparatory Committee and address questions that have arisen as a result of decisions taken at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the States Parties to the NPT.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, my delegation assures you of our full cooperation in the discharge of your great responsibilities in this important session of the First Committee.

The Chairman: We have heard the last speaker in the general debate. I should like to take this opportunity to thank all delegations participating in the general debate for their contributions in this regard.

I now call on the Director of the Centre for Disarmament Affairs, Mr. Davinic.

Mr. Davinic (Director of the Centre for Disarmament Affairs): I have asked to speak in order to draw the attention of delegations to new procedures for making contributions to the various trust funds for disarmament activities of the Secretariat. Delegations will recall that the United Nations Disarmament Information Programme was launched at the second special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament, held in 1982. Every year since then, the Secretary-General, upon the request of the General Assembly, has convened a United Nations Pledging Conference for the announcement of contributions to the trust funds. Incidentally, the Pledging Conference has traditionally been convened each year during the last week of October.

As delegations know, the General Assembly did not request the Secretary-General to convene a pledging conference this year. The Secretary-General nevertheless attaches the utmost importance to the viability of the trust funds and to the information, education, training and research programmes they support. He decided therefore to address a note verbale to all States with several purposes in mind. The first purpose was to explain the situation that I have just outlined. Secondly, the Secretary-General wished to thank all those States which have contributed in the past for their generous financial support to the trust funds, without which the various activities and programmes could not be carried out. Let me stress in that regard that those contributions have been the backbone of not only much of what has been accomplished in the area of education, information and training but also in the field of regional confidence-building and disarmament. Finally, he invited all States wishing to do so to make contributions to the various disarmament trust funds. It should be pointed out in this respect that contributions to the funds can be made at any time during the year.

I should like to highlight some activities financed from the trust funds. Let me refer first to the Voluntary Trust Fund for the United Nations Disarmament Information Programme. This Trust Fund supports, *inter alia*, the production of the *Disarmament Yearbook*, a periodic review entitled *Disarmament* and a publication entitled *The Status of Multilateral Arms Regulation and Disarmament Agreements*. I would like to recall that, just a couple of days ago, in connection with the discussions in the Committee of the medium-term programme of the work of the Secretariat in the field of disarmament, several delegations singled out the *Disarmament Yearbook* as a valuable source of information for them in their work. Detailed information on this programme is contained in the Secretary-General's report, document A/51/219.

The trust fund for the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific, the related trust fund for Public Awareness on Disarmament Issues and the trust fund for Global and Regional Disarmament Activities are used to finance regional conferences and workshops on disarmament and security issues in the region. Those conferences and workshops have continued to support the "Kathmandu process", which works towards greater dialogue and confidence-building among the States of Asia and the Pacific. Detailed information on activities of the Regional Centre can be found in the Secretary-General's report, document A/51/445.

The trust fund for the Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa finances activities which promote confidence-building and cooperation in the region. For example, the Regional Centre has contributed to the work of the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa. The trust fund for the Regional Centre for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean has supported the activities of the Regional Centre in the past. As members are aware, the Secretary-General, much to his regret, was forced to suspend the activities of the Centre at the end of July this year for lack of funds. Let me stress that, if financial support can be assured, there are activities that could be fruitfully pursued, especially in the field of confidence-building, to foster the emerging trends towards trust and openness in areas of mutual concern among the nations of Latin America and the Caribbean. For example, the interest of the region in banning landmines is growing every day

and initiatives are being taken at the national and regional levels to that effect. Detailed information on the activities of these two Regional Centres are to be found in document A/51/403.

In 1995, the trust fund for the Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa was set up by the Secretary-General to assist the financing of the implementation of the programme of work of the Committee, in particular, activities in the promotion of confidence- and security-building in the region of Central Africa. For instance, the Committee was pivotal in offering an institutional framework for the conclusion and signature by most of the States of the region of the Non-Aggression Pact in Yaoundé last July; the representative of Cameroon referred to this particular document in his statement to the Committee this morning.

Finally, the trust fund for the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research allows the Institute to carry out the wide variety of research projects approved by its Board of Trustees. High-quality research can help to build firm theoretical and historical foundations for the support of multilateral negotiations and deliberations in the field of disarmament and international security. It helps to define the parameters of the subject and it can point in new directions and offer new ideas for progress. A report on the Institute's activities is contained in document A/51/364.

Let me reiterate that the Secretary-General is deeply appreciative of the support these trust funds have received in the past and hopes that Governments will contribute generously to these funds in the future.

Programme of work

The Chairman: I would like to remind representatives that, in accordance with the programme of work and timetable, the Committee will embark on the second phase of its work — structured discussion of specific subjects on the adopted thematic approach on disarmament and international security items — on Monday, 28 October.

After necessary consultations with the Bureau of the Committee, I have prepared, with the assistance of the Secretary, a timetable for the structured discussion of specific subjects, the text of which, I believe, has already been distributed to the members of the Committee.

As can be seen, we have five meetings and we propose allocating the subjects into five blocks. In accordance with the indicated timetable, the Committee will begin its discussion on nuclear weapons on Monday, 28 October. In this connection, I should like to state that, after completing the discussion on the aforementioned subject, the Committee will sequentially proceed to the next group of topics in order fully to utilize the time and conference resources available to the Committee. However, if time does not allow the list of speakers to be exhausted in a given meeting, the remaining speakers will have an opportunity to express their views at the last meeting of this phase of the work of the Committee.

Ms. Ghose (India): I would like to thank you, Sir, and the Bureau for giving us this indicative timetable for the structured discussion which is to be held from 28 October.

I just have a query on a point that has been engaging our attention for some time: How do we address the subjects? We have just had a general debate covering all aspects of the issues outlined in these five meetings in your indicative timetable. Are we going in for another round of statements on a general basis? Has the Bureau considered any special way in which the Committee might actually have a discussion on this subject?

It is not that I have an answer. It is just a search for some information and clarification on what you might have discussed in the Bureau as to how we, as the First Committee, might address these issues in the structured debate.

The Chairman: We also discussed this programme at the meeting of the Bureau and it was the intention of the Bureau to avoid the repetition of general debates. We therefore proposed having an informal dialogue with an informal exchange of views. There will be no list of speakers and no order. In that way, every delegation will have the possibility of presenting its view in an informal way. This is our understanding.

May I take it that the Committee agrees with the manner of proceeding as I suggested?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 5.35 p.m.